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ABSTRACT

In the quest for excellence, school districts have a variety of indicators or attributes available by which to gauge their progress. This model, used By the Equity and Excellence Research school districts in Mississippi, monitors achievement in relation to educational excellence. Team members established a list of attributes and various means of measurement. A district then decided on a set of attributes from the list to establish goals for achieving excellence. Data were gathered on a yearly basis and compared to the measures of the selected attributes for excellence by the use of a time-series design. Consistency of performance provided an overview for attaining excellence to aid in long-range planning and measurement. Appended are: (1) a list of the Equity and Excellence Research Team members; (2) a list of attributes of equity and excellence; (3) a checklist of attributes; and (4) attribute information sheets. (SI)

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ATTRIBUTES FOR MEASURING EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN DISTRICT OPERATION

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the
Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration
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Related Literature

The United States' former Secretary of Education, William Bennett, concluded his resignation from Reagan's cabinet by indicating that the United States' educational system suffers severe problems and that this system is far from being close to upgrading the quality of education it should be providing to the students. In 1981 U.S. Secretary of Education T. H. Bell demonstrated a deep concern about "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our education system". In response to his concern, Secretary Bell established the National Commission on Excellence in Education on August 26 of the same year. The commission confirmed the public perception as clearly indicated by the title of their report: A Nation At Risk.

Recent reports by researchers in the education field make it even more clear that the United States' educational system is in a critical state and that something must be done to provide remedial measures for this situation. In the opinion of many authorities, the system is far from being excellent. In such a situation the first step to correct the problem is to bring the educational standards up to an acceptable level, then target standards to achieve and/or maintain excellence.

The topic of education became a major issue in political campaigns at state and national levels. During their gubernatorial campaigns, Governors Ray Mabus and Wallace Wilkinson placed great emphasis on reforming the educational system of Mississippi and Kentucky. With their limited resources, Mississippi, Kentucky, and other states, began to focus on the education issue. Various state

consortia were established with the common goal of enhancing the quality of education in these states.

The Reform Act redefined the mission of Mississippi's education system and established specific requirements for school accreditation in hopes that these changes would be a solution to some of the problems. A shortcoming of the Reform Act was the lack of standard models or prototypes of performance designed on the basis of expected student learning outcomes. This shortcoming placed schools and their staff in a state of frustration and confusion. Their attempts to conduct daily administrative and instructional practices were also frustrated by trying to meet undefined requirements for accreditation.

In a landmark decision the Supreme Courts declared Kentucky's entire educational system unconstitutional. This has brought forth the immediate need for restructuring the system. Much confusion exists concerning the needs and directions of Kentucky's reform. Educators in Kentucky have long lamented the needs of the schools and streamlined their own operations. A legislative appointed auditor reported school administrators had done an admirable job of using their relatively scarce resources. The audit identified problems in the property tax system as the major financial problem facing the state. Reform of the states school systems currently resides in the hands of amateurs instead of the educators who have been immersed in the system and know the intimate natures of the problems. Severely lacking in Kentucky is a guide or prototype by which to model schools.

It is necessary to develop a process of establishing an

appropriate performance prototype that can be modified or corrected until a desired outcome is achieved. One of the main objectives of this performance prototype is to guide school district's efforts to achieve both equity and excellence.

The Turning Point

Today educational research is building an empirically solid foundation which allows more systematic and sophisticated design, monitoring, and evaluation of educational/programs and systems. Numerous statistical tools and techniques are available to assist in the evaluation of many aspects of the overall program. In the quest for excellence, school districts have a variety of indicators or attributes available by which to gauge their progress.

Significance

The long-range significance is to provide a series of options related to excellence in school districts. Thus, districts that have met a state's equity standards (accreditation) can establish their local goals for excellence. The results produced a model that allowed the Equity and Excellence Research school districts (Appendix A) to monitor their achievement in relation to educational excellence. The intent was to establish a process every district in a state could follow.

Methods and Procedures

The population of this study included all measures for students in the schools that were related to the attributes selected by the district from the approved list. The list of attributes established an instrument from which districts selected specific attributes.

Attributes selected were those toward which the district strived to achieve and/or maintain as a mark of excellence.

Team members, through group consensus, established a list of attributes and various means of measurement (Appendix B). A district then decided on a set of attributes from the list to establish goals for achieving excellence.

It was stressed that districts should not compete against each other, but rather select attributes as a goal for measuring their own excellence. Tracking of the selected attributes on a yearly basis would signify the level of excellence attained, i.e., the number of attributes met versus the number of attributes selected. This system allowed each individual district the opportunity to select attributes that would be appropriate measurements of its excellence. It also allowed the districts latitude by disregarding attributes that may not readily pertain to their goal for excellence. Appendix C includes the checklist of Attributes from which the district selected.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered on a yearly basis extending from 1983, when possible, and compared to the measures of the selected attributes for excellence by the use of a time-series design. Individual districts, having designed a self-portrait for excellence, now had a base-line framework for interpretation. Thus the attainment of selected attributes was measured and compared. Consistency of performance provided an overview for attaining excellence to aid in long-range planning and measurement (Appendix D).

Conclusion

The procedures of this research project may be compared to an ipsative approach to measurement. Strengths and weaknesses of individual districts produced a self portrait from which individuals looked at themselves on an ipsative framework. Although this approach may be taken out of its original context of individual assessment, it followed basic concepts as an assessment of an individual, organizational structure. Appendix E reports each district's measure of excellence.

But, more important were the interactions and conclusions by team members in this project. Implementation of these attributes by individual districts had not followed a lackadaisical or haphazard approach, but served as goals for each district in striving for, or maintaining excellence.

School districts in the future, hopefully, will be able to display their performance level and shape their long-range goals to practical use. Districts must develop and establish viable goals and direction for striving to achieve excellence and recognition.

Recommendations

This study represents a baseline data gathering effort. Each district should opt for a leadership role model status for other districts in a state.

The following recommendations are made for future analyses:

1. Each year, a different attribute should be selected in addition to the previous attributes. This will provide a

better overall picture of a district's performance in a wide range of areas.

2. Data from this study should be logged into a computer whereby each additional measure will be automatically reported. A yearly report should be included to each district for analysis.
3. Superintendents from each district should designate a person(s) who will be responsible for collecting the data on a yearly basis. A meeting of the Equity and Excellence superintendents and their designee will be held at the beginning and end of each year. During the year, regularly scheduled meetings should be held. This process will ensure constant contact on a regular basis and provide an environment whereby district response will be prompt and accurate while reporting district progress.
4. The results of the time-series analyses should be forwarded to the state accreditation committees to supplement excellence standards throughout a state. Districts, having met state mandated equity standards, should then begin the process of establishing criteria to measure excellence in operation.

References

National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office), 1983.

PREPS (1988). Position Paper, Organizational Model, and Operational Plan for PREPS As Its Mission Relates to the Education Reform Act of 1982. Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS.

APPENDIX A

EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

RESEARCH TEAM

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APPENDIX B

ATTRIBUTES OF EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

1. ACT Scores
   - increase the percent of students in the upper three quartiles
   - increase the percent of students in the IHL core track
   - increase the mean score for the students in the non-core track

2. Standardized Test Scores
   - increase the percent of students in the upper three quartiles on all areas of mandatory testing (Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11)

3. Honor Roll
   - increase the percent of students who make the Honor Roll

4. Course Selection
   - increase the percent of students in the IHL Core track
   - expand alternative course selection for non-core track
   - develop and/or increase advanced placement program

5. Graduation
   - increase the percent of students who complete their programs (diploma or equivalent) and/or are placed by district

6. Scholarships
   - increase the kind and type of scholarly recognition (National Merit Scholarship, etc.)
   - increase local scholarly recognition under criteria established by individual districts

7. Post-Graduate Attendance
   - increase the percent of students who:
     -- attend a vocational/trade school (perception/awareness)
     -- attend a junior college
     -- attend a four-year college
     -- attend a university

8. School Pride
   - decrease the dollar amount spent on vandalism and/or general facility maintenance repair
   - increase in awards, recognition, trophies, etc. (band, chorus, science, math, athletics, etc.)
   - increase in student participation in clubs, extracurricular activities, etc.

9. Class Size
   - determine and provide "optimum student/teacher ratio

10. Inservice/Workshop Experience
    - <u>appropriate</u> individualized and/or group staff development experiences for teachers (recognition programs)

11. Instruction By Regular Teacher
    - provide incentives for district teachers whereby full-time teachers remain in the classroom more and substitutes are in the classroom less (decrease the dollar amount spent on substitute teachers, and decrease the inappropriate use of sick days)

12. Honor Graduates
    -Determine and provide a specified Honors Program

13. District Holding Power, Dropout, and At Risk
    - provide <u>appropriate</u> alternative programs, i.e., gifted and talented, at risk, GED, etc.

14. Quality Personnel
    - increase district standards for selecting quality personnel

APPENDIX C

CHECKLIST FOR ATTRIBUTES

_____
District Name

-- From your approved list of attributes, place a check by the corresponding number (s) that your district has selected to measure excellence --

Attribute 1 _____

Attribute 2 _____

Attribute 3 _____

Attribute 4 _____

Attribute 5 _____

Attribute 6 _____

Attribute 7 _____

Attribute 8 _____

Attribute 9 _____

Attribute 10 _____

Attribute 11 _____

Attribute 12 _____

Attribute 13 _____

Attribute 14 _____

Total Number of Attributes

Selected _____

-- Please return the list in the return envelope with the next week --

APPENDIX D

Attribute Information Sheets

PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ATTRIBUTE INFORMATION SHEET

_____

District Name

Total number of students 9-12 _____

ATTRIBUTE 1

ACT TEST SCORES

Total number of students who took ACT tests:

1983-84 _____

1984-85 _____

1985-86 _____

1986-87 _____

1987-88 _____

(1988-89 _____)

Total number of students who scored one standard deviation or more below the composite national norm and total number of students in IHL Core and Non-Core track:

Year	X	SD		# at or below	Total # IHL Core	Total # Non-Core
1983-84	18.5	5.9	(13)	_____	_____	_____
1984-85	18.6	6.0	(13)	_____	_____	_____
1985-86	18.8	5.9	(13)	_____	_____	_____
1986-87	18.7	5.8	(13)	_____	_____	_____
1987-88	18.8	5.9	(13)	_____	_____	_____
(1988-89 _____)				_____	_____	_____

ATTRIBUTE 2

SAT SCORES

	# of students who took test	District Average	% Low (1-3)	% Average (4-6)	% High (7-9)
1983-84					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					
1984-85					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					
1985-86					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					
1986-87					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					
1987-88					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					
1988-89					
Grade 3					
Grade 5					
Grade 8					
Grade 11					

ATTRIBUTE 3

HONOR ROLL

Total number of students in grades 9-12:

1983-84 _____

1984-85 _____

1985-86 _____

1986-87 _____

1987-88 _____

1988-89 _____

Total number of students in grades 9-12 who made the Honor Roll:

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Qt 1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Percent	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Qt 2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Percent	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Qt 3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Percent	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Qt 4	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Percent	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

ATTRIBUTE 4

COURSE SELECTION

	Total Number of Students (9-12)	Percent of Students IHL Core Track	Number of Selections for Non-Core Track
1983-84	_____	_____	_____
1984-85	_____	_____	_____
1985-86	_____	_____	_____
1986-87	_____	_____	_____
1987-88	_____	_____	_____
1988-89	_____	_____	_____

Is there an advanced placement program? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, when did it begin? _____, 19_____

Has the advanced placement program been expanded?
Yes _____ No _____

If yes, by what means? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ATTRIBUTE 5

GRADUATION

	Total Number of Freshmen		Total Number of Graduates	Percent (%)	Total # Placed by District
1979-80	_____	1983-84	_____	_____	_____
1980-81	_____	1984-85	_____	_____	_____
1981-82	_____	1985-86	_____	_____	_____
1982-83	_____	1986-87	_____	_____	_____
1983-84	_____	1987-88	_____	_____	_____

ATTRIBUTE 6

SCHOLARSHIPS

What types of scholarships are presently being recognized by the district?

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

_____ Number of Students

Are there local scholarly recognitions? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, what type?

PTA _____

Lions _____

Elks _____

Kiwanas _____

Rotary _____

J.C.'s _____

Other _____ (Specify)

Are criteria established by the district? Yes ____ No ____

ATTRIBUTE 7

POST-GRADUATE ATTENDANCE

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Total Number of Students						
Total Number of Graduates						
Total Number who Attended A Vocational/ Trade School						
Total Number Who Attended A Four-Year College						
Total Number Who Attended A University						

ATTRIBUTE 8

SCHOOL PRIDE

Total dollar amount spent for repair due to vandalism:

1983-84 $_____.00

1984-85 $_____.00

1985-86 $_____.00

1986-87 $_____.00

1987-88 $_____.00

1988-89 $_____.00

CHECK WHERE APPROPRIATE

Awards, recognition, and/or trophies are given for the following areas:

_____ BAND
_____ MUSIC
_____ CHORUS
_____ SCIENCE CLUBS
_____ MATH CLUBS
_____ ATHLETICS
_____ SPELLING BEE
_____ FFA
_____ FHA
_____ LITERARY
_____ DRAMA
_____ OTHER

Total number of participants for each activity:

_____ BAND
_____ MUSIC
_____ CHORUS
_____ SCIENCE CLUBS
_____ MATH CLUBS
_____ ATHLETICS
_____ SPELLING BEE
_____ FFA
_____ FHA
_____ LITERARY
_____ DRAMA
_____ OTHER

ATTRIBUTE 9

CLASS SIZE

Total number of teachers in the district:

Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	Other
1983-84	_____	_____	_____	_____
1984-85	_____	_____	_____	_____
1985-86	_____	_____	_____	_____
1986-87	_____	_____	_____	_____
1987-88	_____	_____	_____	_____
1988-89	_____	_____	_____	_____

Total number of students in district:

Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	Other
1983-84	_____	_____	_____	_____
1984-85	_____	_____	_____	_____
1985-86	_____	_____	_____	_____
1986-87	_____	_____	_____	_____
1987-88	_____	_____	_____	_____
1988-89	_____	_____	_____	_____

Student/teacher Ratio

1983-84	_____	- _____
1984-85	_____	- _____
1985-86	_____	- _____
1986-87	_____	- _____
1987-88	_____	- _____
1988-89	_____	- _____

ATTRIBUTE 10

INSERVICE/WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

Are there recognition programs within the district?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify what type.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are staff development programs catered to the specific needs of individual teachers?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify types of individualized programs.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ATTRIBUTE 11

INSTRUCTION BY REGULAR TEACHER

	Total Dollar Amount Spent on Substitute Teaching:	Total Dollar Amount Spent on Substitute Teaching Resulting From A Teacher's Absence Due to Sick Leave and/or Personal Days:
1983-84	$_____.00	$_____.00
1984-85	$_____.00	$_____.00
1985-86	$_____.00	$_____.00
1986-87	$_____.00	$_____.00
1987-88	$_____.00	$_____.00
1988-89	$_____.00	$_____.00

ATTRIBUTE 12

HONOR GRADUATES

Is there a specified honors program?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify requirements.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there an Honor Diploma?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please complete the following information:

	Total Enrollment 9-12	Total Number of Students Receiving the Honors Diploma
1983-84	_____	_____
1984-85	_____	_____
1985-86	_____	_____
1986-87	_____	_____
1987-88	_____	_____
1988-89	_____	_____

ATTRIBUTE 13

DISTRICT HOLDING POWER, DROPOUT, AND AT RISK

Are there alternative programs for:

	Yes	No
Gifted	_____	_____
Talented	_____	_____
At Risk	_____	_____
GED	_____	_____
Other (Specify)	_____	_____

If yes for any of the above, specify the nature of the program(s) and student target.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ATTRIBUTE 14

QUALITY PERSONNEL

Is there a district policy for selecting "quality" administrative, teaching, and staff personnel?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, have those standards been increased or updated?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, specify the increased standards.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If no, give reason for not increasing or updating.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please attach the Hiring Policy for Each Area.